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Editorials

Inconclusive: The Word for Cuba

THE Senate Preparedness subcommittee, after an investigation of the Cuban situation — past and present—cannot bring itself to be as optimistic about the dangers in Cuba, the Russians in Cuba or the weapons in Cuba as are U.S. intelligence chiefs. But the subcommittee reported it has no conclusive evidence that leads to any conclusions other than those of the Central Intelligence Agency.

And that is about as adequate a picture as can be drawn of the Cuban threat—inconclusive. The CIA may be absolutely right in its interpretations of the evidence that the missiles are gone and that the Soviet troops have been reduced. But then the senators may be absolutely right in doubting these interpretations. The CIA, quite obviously, has been in error before.

The subcommittee reached the heart of the intelligence problem when it observed that absolute assurances can come only from on-site inspection in Cuba. Prime Minister Castro has not allowed and is not likely to allow this. So the prospect is for continued inconclusiveness about the Cuban threat. The only reasonable course of action, then, is to be insistent but cautious.

However, in connection with this report we have been provided with an alternate course of action. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina did some more war-whooping. He suggested a deadline for troop removal, which if not met would be followed by a break-off of diplomatic relations with the Soviets. If necessary, the next step would be a naval and air blockade.

And if that didn't work, said the Senator, "we should turn the matter over to the military." All Senator Thurmond does by talking like this is to bring into question his own judgment. Certainly the subcommittee's report offering only speculations and nothing conclusive does not justify military action. It is not even clear what kind or degree of blockade is called for.

As things stand now, the Senate subcommittee's report does not provide the American public with any new grounds to demand a change in the Administration's policies. There have been suggestions that the Administration itself is considering possible new steps, probably along diplomatic and economic lines. Its judgment can be trusted much more than that of Senator Thurmond.